

BRAHE, CHRISTIAN MICHAEL., M.F.A. Drawings. (2014)
Directed by Professor Mariam A. Stephan. 8pp.

I am a perceptual painter. My work is about looking intently. Based upon my immediate physical surroundings, my paintings and drawings do not attempt to translate a single instantaneous moment of seeing, but instead are orchestrated amalgamations of many individual moments of consciousness built up, destroyed, and built up again over a given duration.

DRAWINGS

by

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A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
2014

Approved by

Committee Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

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Date of Acceptance by Committee

Date of Final Oral Examination

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DRAWINGS.....	1
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	8

DRAWINGS

I am a perceptual painter. My work is about looking intently. Based upon my immediate physical surroundings, my paintings and drawings do not attempt to translate a single instantaneous moment of seeing, but instead are orchestrated amalgamations of many individual moments of consciousness built up, destroyed, and built up again over a given duration. Although each investigation in paint, charcoal, and ink poses its own individual demands and concerns, they are all manifestations of a larger search; a questioning of what it means to look versus what it means to see.

For the past two years, I have grappled with how I see the visual world. Entering graduate school as a representational painter, my relationship towards observation was largely based on mimesis. Reproducing what was in front of me was the ultimate goal, and as such, my earliest paintings and drawings were quite restrictive in this sense. In them, there was a definite start and finish; work was made in a linear fashion, with a clear sense of an end or resolution to work towards. These premature ideas of what observation could be were suddenly turned on its head during my first semester of graduate school. Through drawing, I realized that working perceptually from observation was not merely in the service of mimetic realization, but was instead a necessarily inventive and imaginative process, one that pieced together many moments or parts to create an altogether new reality. The notion of how work could be made forever changed

within me, for painting and drawing was now much more than simply image making, they became agents of exploration and research. For the first time, I began to truly play with visual information I observed in real spaces, piecing parts together to create a newer whole. My early drawings in graduate school were made this way, representing dense worlds that were both chaotic and organized. I was continually reminded of Piranesi's *Carceri* etchings, with their vast cathedral-like spaces and monumental architectural ruins, as I composed my own spaces from elements I observed in Gatewood's foundry.

I constructed similar spaces in my early lithographs and woodcuts, allowing line to define positive and negative structures. At times the spaces were shallow, and at others deep. Unlike the previous drawings, these places became increasingly abstract. Breaking down structures into their essential parts, I would rearrange and compose elements the way perhaps a jazz musician improvises and moves notes around. The reorganization was not random, but experimental. Working from observation remained an important and necessary component to this process of making. Recordings of my perceptions of a particular space served as my raw material, in a way a starting point, upon which I would proceed to play with that information.

Small paintings on paper introduced color to the constructed spaces, as well as opened up new possibilities and challenges. Space and light was now defined by subtle shifts in temperature and saturation as opposed to the high contrast of ink and paper. As such, the paintings took significantly longer to make than the previous drawings or prints had – their surfaces could be built up, destroyed, and rebuilt time and time again. I often worked on multiple paintings simultaneously, both on-site in specific interior spaces I

was observing, as well as in the confines of the studio. Like their predecessors, information broke down quite forcefully, fragmenting logical architectural space into self-contained, idiosyncratic worlds. Amidst the chaotic density of recordings and seemingly disparate notations made over time, I would eventually discover rhythms of shape and color that aided in asserting an order or resolution to each painting. Once such a rhythm was established, a given painting was soon “resolved” and subsequently finished. After making many small paintings in this fashion, I eventually began to sense an inherent artificiality in the presumption of their resolution, for I was actively imposing an order which negated the specificity of observed perceptual moments I saw, and in turn formulated compositional arrangements strongly which adhered to the rectangle of the paper. I found myself making “pretty” little pictorial paintings, and was dissatisfied by their increasing involvement with issues of composition and design, in a way that I felt strayed away from the integrity of the original physical spaces observed.

My frustration with the rectangle, as well as a noted tendency to prescribe a preconceived plan that forced what I saw as an artificial closing-up of a given space within the paintings on paper, eventually led me to draw from film and television. Drawing from perceptual information I observed from moving images on screen, I wanted to record a movement and energy I felt emanating from the constant shifting of pictures and viewpoints scene to scene. Time had a beginning and end, as it was measured by the film’s duration, or in others, multiple viewings of the same film. Although I was interested in a flickering, fast paced movement and fragmentation of images, what I ended up with was a steady layering of dense recordings in ink. The

horizontal bands created by my arm's overlapping movements contributed to a pulsating rhythm that felt stable and constant. At first what appeared to be a strange contradiction between intention and resulting form, I would later recognize as a discovery garnered through time and observation. The inherent unpredictability of the film drawings excited me, and I started contemplating the possibilities of a new work that could potentially develop for months, a time span far beyond the duration of a film. I would begin a perceptual "journaling" or "diary" of a space that I inhabited for long periods of time, a recording purely based on information I took in day to day, devoid of being driven by compositional concerns made after the fact.

As a way to bring these ideas together, I began making a large drawing of what was directly in front of me, which was a wood rolling shelf and folding step stool in my studio. I was attracted to their simple mundane character as objects, and felt they provided me clear visual parameters to observe and work from; a starting point for investigating the formal and abstract ideas I was interested in. In approximately four months time, this exploration would eventually evolve into the work entitled 332.

In line with its more modest predecessors on paper and canvas, the large multi-panel charcoal drawing serves as an embodiment of these concerns, although pushed to more ambitious scale. On my part, 332 was very much an act of submission, both physically and spiritually, a complete giving of myself to the needs and requirements of the work. Throughout its making, I frequently referred to Fra Angelico's frescoes in the monastic cells of San Marco in Florence, particularly in the way each painting actively lived with its inhabitant. Those frescoes stimulated new questions of my own. What

does it mean for an artist and viewer to live with a work over a long period of time? How does one's relationship with a work change or develop over time? What is hidden or revealed? As to keep these initial inquiries fresh in my mind, I was exceptionally wary of intervening too heavily or quickly, of closing up and thereby "resolving" areas the way I did in the small paintings on paper. I felt that by referring back to my old ways of working would distort and ultimately prevent potential discoveries gained through simply letting go. It was very important to not have a preconceived plan or notion of the final image, so that the act of drawing was not solely a means to an end, but rather an agent of vigorous exploration. Not having any idea of where it would go or end up, 332 became an act of faith, one that I had to continually trust, however difficult it was. I would allow the drawing to develop and grow organically in the time that it required, and see what could be garnered through observing the same space for several months, without being heavy-handed in terms of neatly composing the information I took in. Much like prayer, I was after a conversation, a dialogue with the objects being drawn as well as their image within the drawing itself. I had to be as selfless as I possibly could. What could be gained by surrendering my own impositions? The element of the unknown both frightened and excited me.

As it happened, 332 recorded much of time's effects within my own graduate studio (a space I spent most hours of the day and evening in) – the daily shifting light conditions, the movement of furniture, books, papers, mirrors, boxes, bottles, and cans, even myself. Their movements contribute to a lively space, constantly in a state of flux. Tall architectural frames ascend upwards, enclosing sections that seem to spill out its

contents. Individual pockets of space, microcosms of clarity or fragmentation, reveal themselves in time, carved out amidst the chaotic density of the studio. Bits and pieces within the drawing are recognizable as a particular object being preserved, while others break down abstractly into larger movements of line and shape. Similar to the way in which the film and television drawings drew from popular sources such as Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* or Larry David's *Seinfeld*, here too I was interested in the way simple objects one encounters everyday, like books or metal cans, could be transformed or broken down in new ways through perceptual reexamination day to day.

Unexpectedly, the more I observed the space, the longer I looked at a given object, the more parts or areas of the drawing seemed to crumble apart. This would occur in certain sections, while others remained stable. It was only through several months time that these opposing relationships between description and abstraction were revealed to me. The two intentionally coexist with one another. In the same way in which I see and experience the studio space with my eyes, there are areas of focus and of clarity, while others fade away. 332 seeks to operate as the space does, not as a static image, but as a living, breathing object, informed by thousands of individual moments of thought or realization.

Through 332 and its earlier predecessors, I have found that it is only through keen observation made over time that I may enter into a necessary dialogue with what is in front of me, a conversation that becomes meaningful through the long hours spent with it. Without devoting the time it requires, the work operates only as a trivial assumption, like a passing glance or something viewed dimly out of the corner of one's eye. I want to

slow down and consciously choose to do so, even my work is telling me to stop, and think. I want the viewer to stay and be invited to explore the drawing, to live inside, not simply graze its surface, its marks on paper, but in a sense, rest in it and with it, as I do when I make it. I wish for the viewer to understand my work as an active searching, an investigation of space and form that is not exclusive to mimetic description. In this way, I feel that my work bears strong connections with Giacometti, whom I study frequently, as well as contemporary perceptual painters such as Gideon Bok, who also constructs interior spaces that investigate effects of time and movement through a cluttering of objects. In both our work, space physically collapses, breaks down, and is reformed. Time collapses as well, in a way that a single, static image is made up of thousands of individual moments represented by gestural marks on a surface. It is through this lens that I presently see my work operating.

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